

CHANGING THE FUTURE OF THE COAST: REGULATING DEVELOPMENT

76 02391

A Report on the Coastal Plan of the South Coast Regional Coastal Commission

INTRODUCTION

COASTAL ZONE CONSERVATION ACT—1972 SECTION 27001: "The people of the State of California hereby find and declare that the California coastal zone is a distinct and valuable natural resource belonging to all the people and existing as a delicately balanced ecosystem; that the permanent protection of the remaining natural and scenic resources of the coastal zone is a paramount concern to present and future residents of the state and nation; that in order to promote the public safety, health and welfare and to protect public and private property, wildlife, marine fisheries, and other ocean resources, and the natural environment, it is necessary to preserve the ecological balance of the coastal zone and prevent its further deterioration and destruction; that it is the policy of the state to preserve, protect, and where possible to restore the resources of the coastal zone for the enjoyment of the current and succeeding generations . . ."

Available July 10th will be *The Development Criteria of the Preliminary Coastal Plan: A Summary and Guide*. This publication includes a matrix of the policy recommendations and their impacts on both the nature of development and the coastal resources affected. Additionally, there is a simplified, 20-page text of the policy intent and criteria of the State Coastal Plan. Copies may be obtained for \$1.00 by writing the Sea Grant Program, Marine Advisory Program, University of Southern California, SSW 308, Los Angeles, Calif. 90007.

The Coastal Act describes the coastal zone as a "delicately balanced ecosystem." Maintaining the equilibrium of the ecosystem depends on careful regulation of development.

The South Coast Regional Commission's policies on regulating development do not prohibit construction in the coastal zone, but they direct it to places where it is appropriate.

Residential development is directed toward planned, clustered communities in rural areas, the inland-side of coastal communities, and to urban centers where public services already exist.

Major emissions-producing development — freeways, power plants, refineries—are directed away from the coasts of Los Angeles and Orange Counties (identified as critical air areas) to alternative coastal or inland sites.

Clustered, multi-use, commercial complexes served by mass transit will be permitted; strip-commercial development along coastal roads will be prohibited.

First priority for approval is given to commercial-recreational development—hotels, motels, campgrounds, restaurants, recreational vehicle parks, etc.—which help meet the enormous recreational demand of Californians.

This report, the third in a series of four, describes the South Coast Commission's key policies for regulating development. The fourth and final report will describe the Commission's recommendations on the powers, funding, and organization of a future agency assigned to implement the statewide Coastal Plan.

The South Coast Commission's policies have been incorporated into the statewide Preliminary Plan which was reviewed at four public hearings in Los Angeles and Orange Counties in May, 1975. Final revisions of the Plan are scheduled for August and September, with adoption by the State Commission in mid-September. The Governor and State Legislature will receive the final adopted Coastal Plan in January, 1976, for enactment into law.

REGULATING DEVELOPMENT

According to the Coastal Plan, development should be located where it doesn't damage either a natural or man-made resource. Where possible, it should be designed to enhance the public's recreational use of the coast.

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DISCUSSION OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT:

Sprawling, new residential development that drifts out randomly from urban centers is a clear threat to coastal agriculture. When converted to residential/commercial use, the public loses a source of revenue, a source of jobs and a satisfying buffer space between cities. The Coastal Plan found that: *"Coastal agriculture provides many jobs. Estimates are as high as 350,000 jobs in and serving agricultural operations within five miles of the coast. Agriculture and food processing employment is substantial in some counties (e.g. Santa Cruz and Monterey). Gross revenues from agricultural crops are a major portion of the State's economy. In 1969, the value of the 24 principal coastal crops in the 15 counties was estimated at almost \$500 million—more than half of the State total for these crops. Nationwide coastal crops are important economically and as food supply. . . . Vast areas of agriculturally productive lands have been lost to urban expansion. More than 8% of the croplands in the coastal counties in 1958 were lost in the succeeding decade."*

When agriculture is forced inland where soils are poorer, it takes greater expenditures for fertilizer and irrigation to match the production level reached on the coast. The costs are passed on to the consumer.

The opposite of sprawl development is planned development.

Recommendations are that residential development in rural areas be located in low-density, clustered communities. Well-designed, high-intensity complexes should absorb residential demand in urban centers where public services already exist.

Planned communities, either in rural or urban areas, are much less costly to the public in terms of the amount of land they require and the extent of public services. A recent study, *The Costs of Sprawl*, prepared by the Real Estate Corporation for three federal agencies says: "Planned 'high density' communities are 44% cheaper, 44% less polluting, use 44% less energy and 35% less water than the equivalent amount of uses if in single family homes . . . The most expensive community to create and to operate is low-

density sprawl—the most common type of development at the urban fringe."

Siting new communities will be the task of sub-regional planning, the detailed future planning work between local government and the agency designated to carry out the coastal plan. Sub-regional planning will involve translating broad coastal protection policies into specific local zoning ordinances. The goal will be to coordinate land-use decisions and the extension of public services with resource protection.

ENERGY-RELATED DEVELOPMENT:

Of immediate concern to the public is the Commission's stand on energy-related industrial development: offshore oil drilling, tanker terminals, refineries, liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities, and power plant siting in the coastal zone.

Two questions are asked of energy-related development: Is there a clear need for it? Why must it be located on the coast?

The questions are prompted by the serious land-use and environmental problems raised by siting energy-related development in the coastal zone: preemption of valuable, limited coastal land, massive disruption of marine life, increased air and water pollution, and in the case of nuclear power plants and LNG facilities, potential danger to life and property.

Energy purveyors should demonstrate: 1) a clear public need, 2) an evaluation of alternative coastal and inland sites and 3) incorporation of the latest technology to mitigate environmental damage.

The Coastal Plan challenges conventional projections of demand. It says that the high price of oil, the development of alternative sources of energy, and industry's and government's serious commitment to conservation measures can substantially decrease consumption.

Offshore oil and gas production from State lands—up to 3 miles seaward of the mean high-tide—should be deferred until such time as it has been identified as an integral part of a comprehensive national energy program or shown to be vital to California or PAD "V" needs. (PAD "V"—Fifth Petroleum

Administration for Defense District: California, Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii).

Utilities applying for a coastal site for fossil-fuel burning or nuclear power plants must demonstrate that every reasonable effort is being made toward effecting energy conservation and peak load reduction in the service area. They must show a thorough evaluation of alternative coastal and inland sites.

Present tanker terminals are permitted minor expansions to accommodate Alaskan oil tankers of conventional draft up to 150,000 dead weight tons.

Los Angeles Harbor has been identified as one out of three possible sites for California's first LNG facility. The other two sites identified by Western LNG Terminal Co. are Ormond Beach and Point Conception in the South Central Region. The Plan recommends that only one site be selected initially to allow port officials and operators to familiarize themselves with handling the volatile fuel. The site should be a moderately active port, neither in a pristine nor heavily populated area.

The Commission recommends that refineries and freeways should not be located in the critical air areas of the coast—Los Angeles, Orange County, San Diego, and the San Francisco Bay areas—because their emissions aggravate the air pollution problem.

As an alternative to an expanded freeway system that caters to the car, the Plan recommends development of public transportation. Coastal roads should be used for recreation-bound traffic; daily commuter traffic should be diverted to inland routes.

COMMERCIAL-RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Commercial-recreational development gets the Coastal Plan's highest priority over private residential, general commercial or general industrial development, because it permits the greatest number of people to enjoy the coast.

The immediate shoreline should be reserved for water-dependent recreational uses such as boating, swimming, and fishing. There should be

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KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON REGULATING DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTH COAST REGIONAL COASTAL COMMISSION

SHORELINE DEVELOPMENT

- * shoreline development should enhance water-dependent recreation; it should minimally alter the natural environment

UPLAND DEVELOPMENT

- * upland development should complement the public's use of the shoreline; it should augment public recreational facilities or increase access

COMMERCIAL-RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- * commercial-recreational development (hotels, motels, campgrounds, restaurants) should be given first priority for approval over private residential, commercial, or general industrial development

COASTAL-DEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT

- * development that functionally depends on a site near the water such as marinas, ports, power plants, oil and gas, fishing production facilities, etc., should be given first priority for shoreline siting over general types of development; if it endangers coastal resources it must demonstrate: 1) a clear public need, 2) evaluation of alternative sites and 3) incorporation of the latest technology to mitigate environmental damage

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- * commercial development should be clustered into multi-use complexes served by mass transit; strip commercial development along coastal roads is prohibited

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- * residential development should occur in low-density, clustered communities in rural areas and in well-designed, high-intensity complexes in urban areas
- * residential development should not be allowed to sprawl out between urban centers

DEVELOPMENT IN HAZARDOUS AREAS

- * if development takes place in identified areas of geologic risk without proper precautions, the public is absolved from liability for damages

RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION

- * rehabilitation of coastal communities should remove blight; redevelopment involving state and federal funds should provide low and moderate income housing
- * all new construction should be compatible with its natural surroundings



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minimal alteration of the natural environment. Appropriate recreational uses requiring minimal changes in land-forms are tent campgrounds, walk-in campgrounds, picnic areas, and hiking trails.

Large commercial-recreational development such as hotels, motels, restaurants, and recreational-vehicle

campgrounds requiring substantial alteration of the natural environment should be located off the immediate shoreline in upland areas. They can be linked to the shore by trails, shuttles, and jitneys.

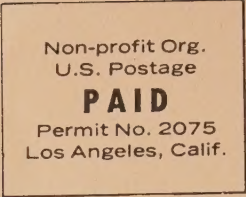
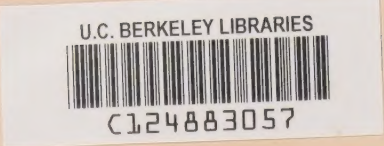
Commercial-recreational development would answer the recreational need of Californians and out-of-state tourists, who, according to the California Dept. of Commerce, account for a

\$2.5 billion a year tourist industry generating over 280,000 jobs.

MARINE PARK AND RESERVE SYSTEMS: The Plan recognizes that a balance must be struck between public recreational use of the coast and resource protection. In some instances

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unregulated public access has damaged fragile resources such as tidepools.

Acquiring marine park and reserve systems would balance both resource protection and public access. The South Coast Commission recommends acquiring six marine park and reserve systems to which public access would be controlled. All development within the parks would be compatible with protecting the uplands, shoreline, and near-in marine resources such as intertidal areas and kelp beds. Private residential development would be discouraged.

The six recommended park areas are: 1) the Malibu coast from the Ventura County line to Malibu Point, 2) the Palos Verdes Shore between Resort Point and Point Vicente, 3) the Irvine Coast between Cameo Shores to Abalone Point, 4) the intertidal and nearshore environment along Catalina and San Clemente Islands, 5) a public observation and interpretative center at Crescent Bay Point in Laguna Beach and Seal Rock, and 6) a public scenic overlook at Dana Point and San Mateo Point.

DEVELOPMENT IN HAZARDOUS AREAS: The South Coast Region is subject to the geologic hazards of floods, earthquakes, landslides, tidal waves, subsidence, and salt-water intrusion.

New legislation should create a single state agency empowered to coordinate all the existing data on geologic hazards developed by other agencies. The new agency should designate areas of geologic risk, impose

appropriate land use and building regulations, and establish criteria by which local governments can specifically review construction in hazardous areas.

On the local level, a report prepared by a registered geologist should be filed at the county level for any property designated within a geologically hazardous area. If the property owner proceeds to build in the area with full knowledge of its potential dangers but without proper precautions, the public is absolved from any liability for damages incurred.

REHABILITATION AND REDEVELOPMENT: Certain coastal areas and communities have been blighted by unsightly signs and buildings that block views, create visual clutter, or are mediocre in design. One of the tasks of sub-regional planning will be to work out solutions for removing blight. The Plan suggests that local appearance and design review boards be set up to reflect community taste.

State and federal money should assist in construction of low and moderate income housing to maintain a socio-economic mix in the coastal zone.

All rehabilitation and redevelopment should be compatible with the natural surroundings. It should incorporate the best energy-saving techniques in its construction.

CONCLUSION: The Coastal Plan is actually a management program. It's focused with a long-term perspective that sees the survival of coastal resources as essential to the health, safety, and general welfare of this and

future generations. Essential to a management program is regulating development so that it occurs in a planned and reasonable manner.

Development should occur in locations that protect both the natural and man-made resources of the coast. It should be designed to enhance the public's ability to reach and enjoy a variety of coastal experiences.



The USC Sea Grant Program is involved in research, education and advisory services for the conservation and wise use of California's marine resources. In such matters as this plan element, Sea Grant Marine Advisory Services exerts every effort to insure public awareness of such public policy. This is one of a series of reviews designed solely to foster discussion of crucial coastal policy issues and encourage public response and contribution to the final formulation of those policies. The funds for this document were made available from the California Coastal Zone Conservation Commission, the State of California, and the USC Sea Grant Program.

Written by Rochelle Braly,
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